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XIV.—*Notes on the Ornithology of the Barberton District of the Transvaal.* By PERCY RENDALL, M.D., F.Z.S.

THESE notes relate to a collection I made during a stay of fifteen months in this portion of South Africa. The birds were obtained within a 20-mile radius of the township of Barberton, with the exception of some I got in the bush-country between the Sabi and Crocodile Rivers, west of the Lebombo range, which divides Mozambique from the Transvaal. The majority of the species were shot while I was living with Mr. W. A. Caldecott at Fever Creek, which is a tributary stream of the Queen's or Lompagwana River. Barberton and its immediate neighbourhood are more singularly barren of bird-life than any spot I have visited; and this may be ascribed to the reckless disforestation practised during the "gold boom" in 1885-6, to supply the wants of the batteries and the large population then resident in the vicinity.

The paucity of species in my list is accounted for by the fact that my professional duties involved long and almost daily journeys on horseback over very rough country, so that it was often impossible for me to carry a gun. If I had not been obliged to subordinate ornithology to other matters, I feel sure that the number of species might have been doubled, especially by research along the numerous river-beds.

1. SERPENTARIUS SECRETARIUS, Layard & Sharpe, B. S. Afr. p. 8.

This handsome species was not uncommon on the flats round Barberton. There is a fine for shooting Secretary-Birds in the Transvaal, on account of their snake-eating tastes, but, from what I could learn, young game-birds, lizards, and small animals formed their usual diet, especially the first-named. I always saw them in pairs, and though I was generally on horseback, they seldom allowed me to get within 50 yards. They ran rapidly away, and did not take flight; in retreating, the crest is lowered, while the head and neck are depressed and stretched forward parallel to the ground. The leisurely stalk is not resumed until about 150 yards have been placed between you.

2. CIRCUS PYGARGUS, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 12.

A male was shot with a chicken in its talons, on 15th January.

3. ASTUR TACHIRO, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 20.

On 20th February a female was obtained.

4. BUTEO DESERTORUM, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 30.

A female was shot on 20th November.

5. LOPHAËTUS OCCIPITALIS, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 41.

On 11th September I got one which was perched on the fence of a fowl-yard; its depredations had been considerable, and it was too wary for a shot-gun.

6. BUBO LACTEUS, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 71.

I shot this Owl at Honey-bird Creek, where I was looking for koodoo. I killed it with a Martini rifle; it was sitting on a big tree in broad daylight, quite concealed by its foliage.

7. BUBO MACULOSUS, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 73.

Many times I tried to shoot one of these Owls, but it was too wary; eventually I caught it with a rat-gin set on the top of one of the posts of a deserted five-stamp battery at Fever Creek, which was one of his favourite perches.

8. *CARINE PERLATA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 77.

This bird I got on the Sabi flats on 27th March; it was being mobbed by a number of little birds in a mimosa-tree.

9. *STRIX FLAMMEA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 82.

This bird was brought to me on 24th January; it had been caught alive in a ruined house.

10. *CAPRIMULGUS LENTIGINOSUS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 87.

At dusk on 27th June I shot a female, and no other species of Nightjar did I obtain. Does the pectination of the inner edge of the middle toe-nail of this and other species of birds afford a relic of evolutionary progress?

11. *CORACIAS GARRULA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 102.

A single specimen from the Makongwa range (6000 feet) behind Barberton.

12. *CORACIAS CAUDATUS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 104.

This bird was occasionally noticed on the topmost boughs of trees, but it is at all times wary and hard to approach. A male was skinned on 9th June.

13. *HAPALODERMA NARINA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 106.

The only specimen I obtained was on that portion of the Makongwa range locally known as "Moodie's Concession."

14. *ALCEDO SEMITORQUATA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 107.

On 30th May I obtained a male.

15. *HALCYON ALBIVENTRIS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 115.

A pair shot on 21st and 29th May respectively. Their stomachs were full of large gryllidæ.

16. *UPUPA AFRICANA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 134.

Several times previously, when riding past a particular spot, I had seen a Hoopoe, and on 5th July, after a prolonged chase, I shot this male, sitting upon a tree. It was in the middle of its moult, and its stomach contained hard-shelled larvæ.

17. *IRRISOR VIRIDIS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 137.

A female, which was in company with three others, was shot on 10th June. The harsh alarm-notes were uttered as the birds

moved restlessly from tree to tree. The remains of a caterpillar and some coleoptera were found in the stomach.

18. *TURACUS CORYTHAIX* (Wagl.); Shelley, Cat. B. xix. p. 440.

Generally seen in pairs, but is uncommon, save in the low tsetse-fly country beyond Honey-bird Port. On the 4th August I procured a male.

19. *COCCYSTES HYPOPINARIUS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 158.

The only specimen of this bird which I saw was one shot on 6th November.

20. *CENTROPUS NATALENSIS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 163.

Though it is more than probable that the common species is to be found along the De Kaap watershed, yet I never handled it. A female of *C. natalensis* was shot on 6th June.

21. *INDICATOR MAJOR*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 168.

While hunting large game with my friend Mr. W. A. Caldecott in the Sabi flats infested by tsetse-fly, we had to thank this little bird for many a good feast of honey-comb, especially in the neighbourhood of the Matiwamba Creek. I never met with a single instance in which this bird led any of my friends or their natives to aught save a bees'-nest. In my experience—or, more accurately, opinion—stories of people being led to snakes, leopards, wild cats, &c., are readily accounted for by the chance that may attend anyone making a "bee-line" through country where all wild animals are plentiful. The thrilling hair-breadth escapes that I heard of were based on hearsay evidence or were of native origin.

22. *POGONORHYNCHUS TORQUATUS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 172.

I got two males of this Barbet: one on 12th June, and the second, though five weeks later, was from the same spot, on the banks of the Lompagwana River. Both were feeding on the fruit of a wild fig-tree, with the seeds of which their stomachs were filled.

23. *POGONORHYNCHUS LEUCOMELAS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 173.

This bird has a knack of frustrating your stealthy advances

towards antelope by perching on the topmost twigs of trees in front of you to utter its loud call-note: a practice which has a wearing effect on the sportsman's temper, since the game recognize its purport!

24. *DENDROPICUS CARDINALIS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 190.

A female on 21st May and a male three weeks later. Both birds were shot in a densely-wooded kloof, and the loud tapping they made on the tree-trunks as they fed resounded through the prevailing stillness.

25. *TURDUS LITSITSIRUPA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 198.

This was obtained on two occasions, when it came to feed on the insects driven out by grass-fires on 31st May and 10th June. Both the birds which I skinned were males, and members of a party barely numbering half a dozen.

26. *PYCNONOTUS LAYARDI*, Gurney; Sharpe, Cat. B. vi. p. 132.

One female only was obtained at Fever Creek on 5th July, but the species, though sparingly distributed, was not uncommon.

27. *CRATEROPUS JARDINII*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 212.

From a party of six birds on 2nd August I shot a female. Their alarm-note is harsh and clattering, and it is astonishing, as one after another they join in the chorus, what a noise a few birds can produce. I found large grasshoppers in the stomach. The irides had an outer ring of deep orange that merged into bright yellow at the papillary margin.

28. *COSSYPHA HUMERALIS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 228.

I collected three of these birds, two males and a female, on 26th March, 2nd June, and 12th July respectively. The latitude of Barberton is $26^{\circ} 40'$, which corresponds with Sir Andrew Smith's observations as to its geographical range, "North of 26° ." The iris was hazel, and the stomach contained insects.

29. *MYRMECOCICHLA BIFASCIATA*, (Temm.); Seebohm, Cat. B. v. p. 355.

On 22nd April I shot a male at the bottom of a rocky donga perching on large boulders. It was in full moult, and its stomach was filled with black ants.

30. *THAMNOBIA CINNAMOMEIVENTRIS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 232.

Out of a party of eight birds on 6th July I shot a male.

31. *SAXICOLA GALTONI*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 234.

The stomach of a female I shot on 12th June contained a grasshopper.

32. *PRATINCOLA TORQUATA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 250.

An immature male was obtained on 15th June. Its beak, tarsus, and feet were black, and its stomach was full of black ants.

33. *PRINIA MYSTACEA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 258 and p. 822.

On 10th July a male which I shot had a steel-grey bill. The iris was bronzy yellow. Tarsus and feet flesh-coloured. Its stomach contained small grass-seeds.

34. *CISTICOLA ABERRANS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 271.

Common, and everywhere in evidence amongst low grass and bushes. I shot one on 3rd July.

35. *SPHENÆACUS AFRICANUS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 280 and p. 824.

On 16th April a male was procured with the crop and stomach full of grass-seeds. This was probably the subspecies that Captain Shelley distinguishes as the Transvaal form, *S. natalensis*. It was far advanced in moult. Beak and legs were of a dark steely grey.

36. *ACROCEPHALUS TURDOIDES*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 289 and p. 826.

I got one on 17th February: possibly an extension of its geographical distribution more widely than is generally known.

37. *CINNYRIS AFER*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 313.

I have notes of these birds taken on 26th March and 4th August in widely separated localities, both situated more than 3000 feet above sea-level.

38. *CINNYRIS CHALYBEUS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 314.

One specimen I obtained on 4th August from the Makongwa range at more than 4000 feet elevation.

39. *CINNYRIS AMETHYSTINUS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 315.

In the Bonanza Valley I got a male on 22nd April.

40. *CINNYRIS TALATALA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 318.

One male was shot at Fever Creek on 30th June.

41. *ZOSTEROPS VIRENS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 325.

On 10th July I procured a male. Its bill and legs were dark steel-grey. Iris grey exteriorly, with a pupillary margin hazel in coloration.

42. *PARUS NIGER*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 331.

A male shot on 3rd July had its irides dark hazel, bill and legs blue-black. The stomach contained hard-shelled larvæ.

43. *TERPSIPHONE PERSPICILLATA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 352.

At Fever Creek on 26th March I shot a male.

44. *LANIUS COLLARIS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 374.

From Fig-tree Creek I got a female on 23rd June.

45. *LANIUS SUBCORONATUS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 377.

The fact that I took a male of this species on the 23rd April serves to prove that it occurs side by side with the foregoing bird. Its stomach contained coleoptera and hard-shelled insects.

46. *DRYOSOPUS CUBLA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 392.

A pair were shot on 15th June. Irides brilliant orange-red. Bill—upper mandible black, lower steely grey. Legs steel-colour. The stomach of the male contained various small insects, that of the female a large mantis.

47. *DRYOSOPUS RUFIVENTRIS* (Sw.); Gadow, Cat. B. viii. p. 134.

One male only was obtained on 4th July: its food proved to have been orthoptera.

48. *TELEPHONUS ERYTHROPTERUS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 394.

On 12th July one specimen was procured.

49. *TELEPHONUS SENEGALENSIS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 394.
A male on 30th May and another six weeks later. In the stomach were noticed seeds and insects.
50. *BRADYORNIS ATER*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 405.
I got a female on 12th June.
51. *PRIONOPS TALACOMA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 406.
Two females on 5th and 9th June. The stomach of the first contained a mantis. Bill black; iris light yellow, orange-coloured wattling round the eyes; legs flesh-coloured.
52. *SIGMODUS TRICOLOR*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 407.
On 16th July a male was shot; its stomach contained orthoptera. The bill was red. Iris bright yellow. Red pectinated wattling round the eyes. Legs and feet were of a sealing-wax red.
53. *BUCHANGA ASSIMILIS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 408.
A male which was hawking for grasshoppers was shot on 29th May at Fig-tree Creek.
54. *ORIOLOUS LARVATUS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 413.
One of these birds I found in Rimer's Creek on 20th August.
55. *HETEROCORAX CAPENSIS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 415.
One pair of these birds, which were extremely shy, frequented a farm in the centre of the Barberton flats, halfway to the Kantoor. They never allowed me to get within shot, even on horseback.
56. *CORVUS SCAPULATUS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 416.
Only on rare occasions did I see this species; the 4th August is the only note I made of its appearance.
57. *BUPHAGA AFRICANA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 418.
I got one male out of a party of six birds that flew off the backs of some trek-oxen which were feeding at a drift of the Lompagwana River, where they had been outspanned. This was on 30th May.

58. *VIDUA PRINCIPALIS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 453.

Common, and locally known as the Kaffir Fink. One male in nuptial dress was shot on 25th November. The birds congregate in large flocks after breeding, when the males lose their long tail-feathers and assume their duller garb.

59. *CHERA PROGNE*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 458.

This species is common on the flats round Barberton. To the natives it is the "Sakubula," and the large black tail-feathers are used in bunches by the Swazi "Regiment of Imfaaus" (or young men) to adorn their head-dresses and shields, with great effect. The natives run the birds down on wet days, when the moisture prevents them from rising after a flight or two, and they are killed with sticks and knobkerries.

60. *PYROMELENA MINOR* (Reichenb.); Sharpe, Cat. B. xiii. p. 238.

The only one I got was on 4th August.

61. *ESTRILDA DUFRESNII*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 469.

One obtained on 30th April had its crop full of grass-seeds.

62. *ESTRILDA ASTRILD*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 470.

Two birds were shot on 6th June out of a flock of about thirty.

63. *LAGONOSTICTA BRUNNEICEPS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 476.

One specimen on 28th March.

64. *CRITHAGRA RENDALLI*, Tristram, Ibis, 1895, p. 130 and p. 379.

Examples of this species were shot on 17th February, 1894.

The males and females were together in a large flock, but were obtained with some difficulty, since I happened that day to be riding a particularly gun-shy horse, which reared and backed when I fired, and almost refused to let me remount with the gun in my hand. This proved all the more troublesome as the birds were wild and had to be repeatedly followed over the open flats before I could obtain both sexes.

65. *EMBERIZA FLAVIVENTRIS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 491.

The colonial Dutch name for this bird is "Strep-kopje" (or Striped-head). A male was shot from a tree on 2nd July. Iris hazel; legs and feet yellowish brown; stomach full of small seeds.

66. *MIRAFRA AFRICANA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 519.

On 17th February a male was shot on the Barberton plain.

67. *MACRONYX CROCEUS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 532.

As this bird circles down and alights with outstretched wings, the tail is also spread and the white rectrices are very noticeable. It has a short and rather pleasing song whilst on the wing.

68. *ANTHUS LINEIVENTRIS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 540.

On 6th July a female of this species was collected.

69. *MOTACILLA VIDUA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 545.

These birds were always seen in pairs near running water. Iris hazel, tarsi and feet black.

70. *COLIUS STRIATUS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 555.

The colonial name for this species is the "Mouse-bird"—why I know not, but presume the decomposed feathers of the breast are responsible for the simile. The stomach of a male shot on 29th May contained oval seeds.

71. *TRERON DELALANDEI*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 558.

This bird was both scarce and wild; it pitches, like most Pigeons, on the very topmost twigs of the trees on which it alights.

72. *TURTUR CAPICOLA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 567.

The crop and stomach of a male I shot were full of seeds.

73. *TURTUR SENEGALENSIS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 568.

A male shot on 14th June had the irides dark hazel, the tarsus and feet dark red.

74. *CHALCOPELIA AFRA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 570.

I got a male of this Dove on 30th May; this and the two foregoing species were all of them from Fever Creek.

75. *NUMIDA CORONATA*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 581.

This species I only met when hunting large game in the thorn-veldt, between the Sabi and Crocodile Rivers. Whenever we got the chance we shot the birds of the year, as they are particularly good eating.

76. *GUTTERA EDOUARDI* (Hartl.); Grant, Cat. B. xxii. p. 382.

I saw birds of this species alive near Barberton, but I am almost certain that they had been imported from Delagoa Bay, since, to my knowledge, the natives there used to bring them alive to sell in Lorenzo Marqués, in the neighbourhood of which settlement they must be common.

77. *FRANCOLINUS CLAMATOR*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 591.

Both this species and the following are indifferently known as "Bush Pheasants." I have seen them running along bridle-paths near thick bush, into which they betake themselves at the very first alarm.

78. *FRANCOLINUS SUBTORQUATUS*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 600.

Found in more open spots, but very difficult to flush without a good dog. It is excellent eating, as, indeed is every Francolin which I have yet shot.

79. *COTURNIX COTURNIX*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 603.

It was generally during February that some one would suddenly come into camp with the intelligence that "the Quail have come." They were seldom to be shot in any numbers, save for, roughly speaking, one month after their arrival, when they used to depart, as they came, by night.

80. *CREX CREX*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 611.

One specimen was obtained on 26th December.

81. *OTIS KORI*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 632.

In the tsetse-fly country, between the Sabi and Crocodile Rivers, we saw a grand specimen of this bird, but we were after blue wildebeest, and therefore did not fire at it.

82. *OTIS LUDWIGI*, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 636.

On several occasions I saw this bird when I was riding across the Barberton plain without a gun; when I rode towards

it, it ran quickly away, but did not take flight. It is locally known as the "Paauw."

83. OTIS SCOLOPACEA, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 637.

Locally known to colonists as the Silent Korhaan; this latter word being the Dutch synonym for Bustard. The species was noticed sparingly near wooded dongas on the Barberton flats, and especially on a large farm belonging to my friend Mr. Edward Bourhill.

84. OTIS AFROIDES, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 642.

Very vociferous when it is flushed; it has the sobriquet of the Noisy Korhaan. On Mr. Bourhill's farm we shot it (and also *Francolinus subtorquatus*) on the summits of low rolling grassy spurs, not far from cover.

85. PARRA AFRICANA, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 648.

I missed a bird which I fancied was *Anas sparsa* and killed a *Parra* on a vlei in the Sabi flats; upon walking round the pool to pick up this bird I came upon the spoor of two black rhinoceroses that had drunk at this vlei but a short time before.

86. VANELLUS SPECIOSUS, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 679.

One female was shot on 1st January.

87. RHYNCHÆA CAPENSIS, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 679.

Only once seen on the banks of the North Kaap River.

88. SCOPUS UMBRETTA, L. & S., B. S. Afr. p. 725.

The colonial Dutch name for this bird is the "Podda Vanger," which alludes to its well-known taste for batrachians. A bird which I shot feeding in the stream which runs through Fever Creek had a large number of small leeches in its stomach.

Fort Johnston, Nyasaland,
12th Sept., 1895.